

OBITUARY

HORACE MORTON ARMITAGE, 1890-1980

Horace Morton Armitage, 89, retired Chief of the Bureau of Entomology, California Department of Agriculture, a nationally known expert in insect pest control, passed away January 23, 1980, at Chula Vista, California.

Born in Butte, Montana in 1890, and educated in Corona, California, he started his career as field entomologist with the old Land and Town Company of Chula Vista in 1911. Following the "big freeze," he became San Diego County Horticultural Inspector in 1913, and Commissioner in 1915. In 1918, he entered State service as Assistant Superintendent of the State insectary at Alhambra. When this service was transferred to the University of California at Riverside, he became Assistant Entomologist in charge of its insectary at Whittier. In 1923 he was appointed Deputy Agricultural Commissioner of Los Angeles County in charge of the county insectary.

In 1931 he returned to State service as Associate Chief of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine in charge of the Bureau's work at the Port of San Francisco. When the Bureau was divided in 1945, he became Chief of the new Bureau of Entomology in Sacramento, a position he held until retirement in 1955.

As Chief of the Bureau of Entomology, he was responsible for detecting the presence of new major insect pests of agriculture within the State, and with attempting their eradication before they became firmly established. In this respect he planned and carried out eradication measures directed against the Western grapeleaf skeletonizer, which involved the elimination of all wild grapes within the confines of San Diego County, as well as protective measures designed to prevent the spread of the Mexican fruit fly into California from Lower California, which involved the spraying every three weeks of all citrus and deciduous host trees within five miles of the Mexican border in San Diego and Imperial Counties.

Other projects were directed against the Mexican bean beetle in Ventura County, the citrus whitefly in Orange, Los Angeles, Fresno, Madera and San Benito Counties, the cherry fruit fly in Siskiyou County, Hall's scale in cooperation with USDA in Butte and Yolo Counties, and the Khapra beetle, a major pest of stored grains, in all Southern and many Northern California counties. The last named project required unusual methods involving the covering of huge storage warehouses and mills with gastight tents to permit their fumigation.

In 1949 he acted as technical advisor to a sub-committee of the State Legislative Joint Interim Committee on Agriculture and Livestock Problems, visiting the Hawaiian Islands to review the Oriental fruit fly problem



as it concerned the California fruit industry. His work with the Mexican fruit fly required his presence in Mexico City to confer with USDA authorities and research workers. As a consulting entomologist following retirement, he outlined for the Canadian Department of Agriculture procedures for the eradication of a suspected infestation of Oriental fruit moth, a serious pest of deciduous fruits, in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia.

In addition to eradication problems, he was responsible for conducting state-wide control measures against grasshoppers, and against the sugarbeet leafhopper, the latter a major pest of a wide range of high value crops in the San Joaquin Valley.

He was a long-standing member of the Entomological Society of America (photograph, courtesy of E.S.A.), serving on the Governing Board for five

years and its President in 1957. In 1967 he was given the single honor of being made an Honorary Member. He was a longtime member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; past-President of the Pacific Branch of the E.S.A., an organization of the 11 western states; past-President of the Pacific Coast Entomological Society; also of the Northern California Entomology Club and the Southern California Entomological Club of which he was a charter member.

He was the author of many published articles pertaining to his activities appearing in the Bulletins of the State Department of Agriculture, the University of California, the USDA and in various other major agricultural publications.

His wife, the former Adah Monroe, passed away in May 1978. We express our sympathy to his daughters, Mrs. Thomas Nielssen of National City, California and Mrs. Kenneth Street of Alamo, California.

Mr. Armitage was well respected by those who knew and worked with him. The following are some quotations from various co-workers and other friends concerning "Mort." "He was not one to set on testimonials." "A man of vision, conviction, action." "When you worked for Mort, you worked with him." "Not ivory tower recluse." "You always knew who was boss." "Not a diplomat at expense of job to be done." "Good friend in adversity or other differences." "Well guarded sense of humor." "Vivid personality." "Funniest when going got roughest."

Above the main entrance to State of California Office Building #1 in Sacramento, is found in bold lettering these words from a poem by Sam Foss: "BRING ME MEN TO MATCH MY MOUNTAINS." H. M. (Mort) Armitage was such a man.

Robert W. Harper and George M. Buxton